



CA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
STATE
SPECIAL SCHOOLS

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California School for the Blind

VOLUME 3, EDITION 3

JUNE 2012



Superintendent's message

By: Stuart Wittenstein

Welcome to our graduation issue for 2012!

Inside you will read comments written by our creative and caring seniors in the class of 2012. They express their gratitude for the people and the learning they've encountered at CSB –

and their excitement at what the future holds for them, including work, higher education, the Hatlen Center for the Blind and the Orientation Center for the Blind.

In addition you will find interesting articles on our students discovering "Urban Staircases," our newly formed CSB Education Foundation, the "Sounds of Space" and our chance to play a part in this exciting adventure, and independent physical activity and personal goal setting.



Thanks for your interest and support in the exciting programs and futures planning taking place at CSB. Have a wonderful and safe summer and look for more issues of the *Braille Bites* when school returns in the Fall.



Urban Stairways, here we come!

By: Cheryl Besden

Did you know there are urban stairways? They exist in very hilly areas to make it easier for people to get from one street to another. There are special volunteer groups that maintain and promote these stairways. The students in Amanda Bybee's class had a visit from the president of the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association. Keith Skinner explained why these stairs exist and how



groups like his maintain and promote

them. Then, along with Nita Crow and Cheryl Besden from O&M, the class took a field trip to some urban stairs in the Berkeley Hills. The students practiced their cane techniques on the stairs and learned that even if you get

lost, you can ask for public assistance and find your destination. The group had a picnic lunch in a lovely park. In the afternoon they visited the home of a mosaic artist to explore her work and learn how mosaics are made. These students recommend that you explore urban stairs on your own. You never know what treasures and adventures await you!



California School for the Blind Education Foundation is up and running!

By: Sharon Sacks

Dear CSB Alumni, Friends, Families, & Staff,

I am writing this letter to inform you that the California School for the Blind Education Foundation (CSBEF) received its 501(c)3 status, and we now have a bank account with Fremont Bank. The board of directors of CSBEF is excited to share this news with you. In an effort to celebrate the foundation's inaugural we want to provide opportunities for those who support **CSB** to honor the beginning of such an important entity. With your help students, teachers, and residential staff will be able to participate in programs and activities that cannot be provided by the state of California. These programs include participation in out of state sports competitions like karate and goalball, participation in Close Up (Washington DC trip) or Space Camp, and opportunities to participate in fine arts, social science, and science field trips allows students to experience the world around them. All of these activities enrich the lives of our students. Your support will enhance our assistive technology and low vision programs by providing funds for specialized devices.

As the 2012 school year draws to a close we are proud of the accomplishments of our students and our staff. They are doing more with much less financial support. As you saw during our 150th anniversary celebration, we have a dedicated and creative staff. Our school motto, "*high expectations plus mutual respect equals positive outcomes*" is represented of that spirit. Please consider supporting our school by being becoming an inaugural sponsor!

- **Cheetah Sponsor:** Celebrate your student's achievements with a \$25 donation.
- **Classroom Sponsor:** Acknowledge a teacher for the hard work he or she has done this school year with a \$50 donation.
- **Program Sponsor:** Help support your favorite CSB program (music, art, education, transition, residential, adapted physical education, orientation & mobility, apartment living, low vision, Rocket Shop & assistive technology) with a \$100 donation.
- **Innovation Sponsor:** Equip our Assistive Technology or Low Vision classrooms with the newest devices with a \$250 donation.
- **School Sponsor:** Support our school with a \$500 donation.
- **Community Sponsor:** Become a community supporter with a \$1,000 donation.
- **Empowerment Sponsor:** Endow CSBEF with a \$10,000.
- **School Sprit Sponsor:** In the spirit of giving, any donation is accepted.

All contributions are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to *CSBEF* and send your inaugural donation to:

CSBEF
P.O. Box 2624
Fremont, CA 94536-0624

Thank you for your generosity and support of our school. In a time when budgets are limited, support from foundations like CSBEF is essential.

Eduardo

Hello, my name is Eduardo. I am a 21 year old student at the **California School for the Blind**. This is my third year attending **CSB**. Before **CSB**, I was attending high school in Santa Rosa, CA where I lived with my family. Now I am about to graduate from the home of the Cheetahs, and I thank all the staff for their empathy and support that they have demonstrated. My **CSB** experience definitely would not have been the same if it wasn't for each and every individual who helped me along the way. For that and more I have nothing but respect and appreciation for these people.

During my time at **CSB**, I've experienced a lot of things that I would have otherwise not had the opportunity to have done so. One of the most important things that I got out of my time here is having had the chance to be in the Apartment Living Program; where I was introduced to the experience of living independently. In addition, I received valuable work training skills that will prepare me to make it as far as I want to. Furthermore, I thank the staff who helped me become a better student; their support pushed me to make it through college courses and find myself when I felt lost. I also participated on really fun activities which I will never forget, such as I Fly in Union City and zip lining in the little town of Occidental in Sonoma County. That was really a blast. I've had a lot of fun, and learned a lot while I've been here, but the time for me to test new waters is around the corner.



In conclusion, after **CSB**, I am scheduled to go to the Hatlen Living Skills center in San Pablo, CA. My expectations are to get better technology, and keep learning additional skills. I also want to keep going to college and fill myself up with knowledge so that in the future I can work as a Forensic Medical Assistant or an Emergency Medical Technician.

Xander

I have been a student at **CSB** since 2010, what I can really say about my leaving besides thank you. Thank you to all of you for dealing with my ADHD craziness. Although I'm not sure what the future holds, I am sure that no matter what happens, I will be able to overcome it. **CSB** has been my home and I will take what I have learned here with me for the rest of my life. So thank you all for everything. When I leave **CSB** I will be going to the Hatlen Center.



Ghesal

Hello, My name is Ghesal M. I have been here at **CSB** for two years. I have done many things at **CSB**. I have learned how to write Braille letters and I have learned how to use the stove while I am cooking. I have learned many short cut keys on the computer. I have learned how to use my cane from Gary, my O&M teacher. I have learned how to communicate better with other people. I have learned time management skills. I have learned how to use the talking cash register at the Rocket Shop. My favorite class is Braille because I use a Braille note. I am looking for another program to go to after graduating from the **California School for the Blind**.



Robin

Hi! My name is Robin; I'm 22 years old and a graduating senior at the California School for the Blind (**CSB**). I have been attending **CSB** for 12 years as a residential student. I live in Sacramento, California with my family. I have many different hobbies and interests that range

from reading/listening to books to camping. Photography, art, watching TV, reading, hanging out with my family, friends and playing with my pets are my favorite hobbies.

I was enrolled at **CSB** in October 2000. Since then I have learned, participated in and experienced many activities and skills; as well as made countless memories. A few of the things that I learned that stand out are how to read and write Braille more efficiently. I've enjoyed learning how to use different adaptive technology, such as Zoom Text, using a scanner and Open book. One program that I participated in is the Apartment Living Program (ALP); the ALP program has really helped me grow and become more responsible. Through the Department of Rehabilitation I was able to obtain work experience, my favorite was working at the Tri City Animal Shelter in Fremont.

I have taken many trips through the school some of my favorite were the Sarah

Winchester Mystery House, Yosemite National Park, the tactile dome at the Exploratorium in San Francisco and going to a play. Two other activities I enjoyed learning were the sport of Goalball. Goalball can be challenging but also a great source of exercise because you do a lot of moving around. The second activity which I learned how to play just this year was tennis. I really liked learning how to play tennis, it's pretty cool. Before I thought the only way I could play tennis was on the Nintendo Wii. I could go on and on but then you'd get bored by reading pages of memories, so I just mentioned the ones that stuck out in my head. I would like to give recognition and thanks to all the counselors, teachers and staff members at **CSB**. I want them to know how much I appreciate them. There are too many people to name, but I would like to highlight just a few. Jami, Mini, Marcia, Ron, Delena, Jo Anne, and Mary D.. Each of these people has made a big impact in my life in different ways. After leaving **CSB** I am hoping to attend the Hatlen Center for the Blind in San Pablo, California, that is my first plan. Eventually I would like to get some form of higher education and receive a degree or a certificate. I would like to one day work with animals in some way.





Randy

My name is Randy. I live in Salinas, California. I like to play video game and watch baseball. I am a HUGE GIANTS fan. I like to watch YouTube, especially the

Ride channel; it has everything that has to do with skateboarding. Skateboarding is another of my interests. I love to watch GhostRobo; he is my favorite person on YouTube to watch do video game commentary. He is just awesome!!!

I have many **CSB** memories. I enjoyed trips I took with Northridge Dorm and my counselor, Bob. We would go bowling, out to eat, the mall and Starbucks every Tuesday and Wednesday. I have gone on some terrific class field trips and apartment program trips such as the USS Hornet. My favorite class trip was to San Francisco where the senior class got to take a picture with Santa Clause, which was really fun!

I would like to thank Bob, my Northridge counselor for making me feel welcome at **CSB**. Theadora, Robin and Travis for their friendship; all of you are the best friends in the world. Cheryl Besden for being the best O&M teacher I have ever had. Ms. Durski for all your help in class.

To all my friends at **CSB** and fellow graduates, I hope you all have a great life and make something of it.

I am returning in the fall and hope to be going to Hatlen Center in January 2013.



class of 2012

Theadora

My time at **CSB** is a long one. I have been here for over 13 years. I got here when I was 7. It is going to be a very big change for me to leave. I am going to miss all of my friends and my teachers. I am especially going to miss Marcia and Roger.

After **CSB**, I will be going to The Hatlen Center for the Blind. It will be a new experience for me. For those individuals who don't know, it is like the Apartment program here, but more intense.

I have learned a lot from here. Some things I have learned are, how to use a computer, GPS and O&M skills. I hope the force will be with you, and the stars are watching over you.



Gregg

Hi my name is Gregg T. I have been coming to **CSB** for 4 years. I enjoyed coming here because I learned a lot. I'm blind. I'll be going to the Orientation Center for the Blind which is in Albany, CA and is an adult version of here. Accept I'll be staying there on weekends because they have dorm counselors 24/7! I'm excited for my big adventure! I'll be going there on July 17th!



Jennifer

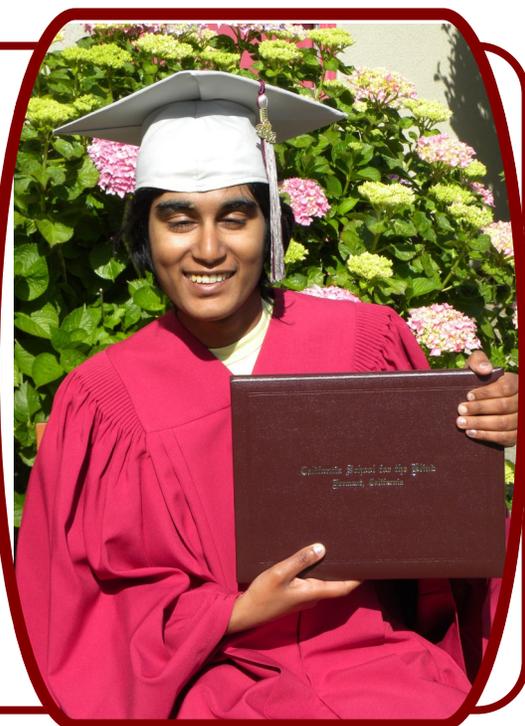
My name is Jennifer J. I've been at **CSB** for six years. I came to **CSB** when I was fourteen years old. My favorite thing at **CSB** is being in the spring concert every year. I learned how to play an instrument called a harmonica from Mr. Siligo, the music teacher. Another thing I like to do at **CSB** is telling people jokes and making them laugh. I learned lots of things from different teachers at **CSB**. I learned how to navigate YouTube on the computer from Adrian, the computer teacher. I also learned how to research on the internet. I learned how to email people on the Braille Note from Jerry, another computer teacher. I also learned how to get around campus from Nita, the O&M. teacher. I learned how to take the bus independently as well. I also learned how to use a stove for cooking food from Miss Nanako, the classroom teacher. That's what I've learned at **CSB**. After I graduate **CSB**, I'm going to go to Yuba College. I'm going there because they have a program for people who have disabilities. I'll probably take computer classes there too. I also might take Choir. I even might take that parenting class if the college has it. After I've graduated from college, I'd like to get a job as a telephone receptionist. That's what I'll do after I graduate **CSB**.



Amy

My name is Amy. I have been at **CSB** for five years. I started working in the Rocket Shop since 2009, when it first opened. It has been fun here. I want to thank Miss Bybee, Miss Nanako, Edith, Vic, Mr. Siligo. I really enjoyed singing in the Glee Club. Also, I can whistle very well. My teacher Miss Bybee has a Bird Clock that makes different bird sounds. I can imitate one of the sounds from the bird clock. My friends gave me nick names from different movies. I also had a friend who used to call me a song bird.

I will miss being here at **CSB**. After **CSB** I might move to Texas to work at a bakery, or I might take a ceramics class in Seaside, CA.



Nathaniel

Hello, my name is Nathaniel M.

I have been a student at **CSB** for the past three years. I came to **CSB** because I wanted to learn how to function as a visually impaired person. While I was here I took classes in art, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, adapted physical education and braille.

The most fun part was getting to fly on an airplane every weekend to and from the Ontario Airport. I enjoyed the time I spent talking to my mom in the car alone on our way to the airport.

During the week, I lived in the dormitory. I made lots of friends there. The dorm counselors were funny. They made sure that we got to go places and learn about new things. We went to baseball games, basketball games and a hockey game in San Jose.

After I leave **CSB**, I want to move back home with my family in Riverside. I have been researching classes which I can take at the Riverside City College. I hope I can take computer classes and learn to use a computer independently with an embosser.



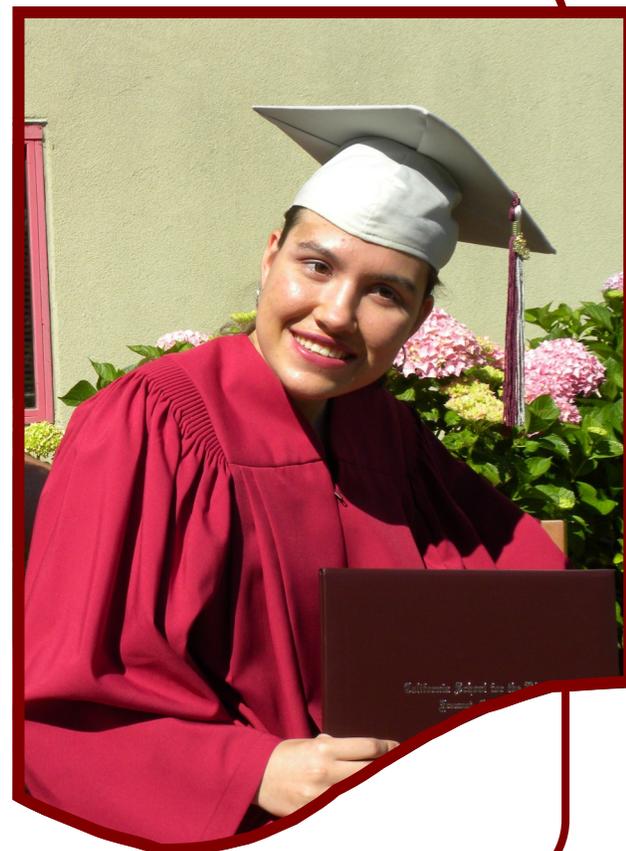
Amanda

Hi, my name is Amanda; I have been attending **CSB** for the past 7 years. When I came to **CSB**, my first teacher was Ms. Cook.

I have also had Mrs. Willows, Ms. Chadow and most recently Ms. Patton as my teachers here at **CSB**. I like all the teachers I have had here.

My favorite things about **CSB** are making friends with a lot of nice students. My two best friends are Ashley and Cody; we have been best friends since my first year at **CSB**. I really like the Art program at **CSB** because I am very artistic. I love my O& M class this year because my job is to help groom Gilly. Gilly is a very friendly dog and I learned a lot during that period.

I am not sure what I will be doing after **CSB**. My Mom and I will figure it all out this summer. I do know that I want to keep in contact with my friends at **CSB**.





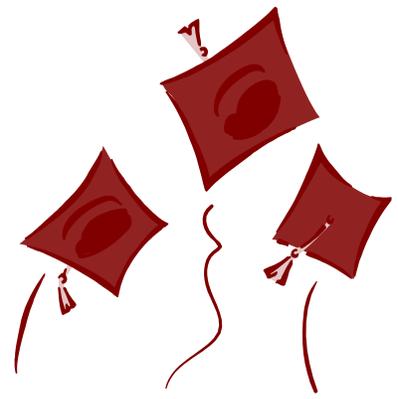
CLASS OF 2012

Elvia

Hello, my name is Elvia M. I am so glad to be graduating this year from **CSB**. I have attended school here for the past ten years. Over that time, I learned to read and write braille. I participated in the all school braille reading contest called the "Braille Bee" where I earned a second place ribbon in the Level 2 category. This was the most exciting thing that happened to me at **CSB** because until then I didn't think I could ever learn the braille contractions. Also, I have started to learn how to type on the computer. I like to write by spelling words because the computer has a special screen reading program called JAWS which reads the letters and words back to me so I know when I have made a mistake. When I leave **CSB**, I will continue my computer lessons at the Lion's Blind Center in Oakland.

Because of the things that I have learned at **CSB**, I know that I have the self-confidence to take Para-transit to a grocery store to shop for food to cook for myself. I can use my cane to walk independently if I want to go for a walk. But most of all, I know that I am ready to move on with my life.





Michael

My name is Michael D. I enjoyed being at this school because I got to hang with a lot of my classmates and friends. I am a day student

so I go home every day.

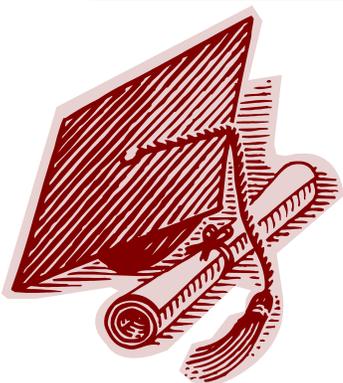
I cheer for the San Francisco 49ers when I watch them play on TV. I also enjoy listening to music. My favorite music is rap. I like to play sports, like basketball and also kick a soccer ball around. I like to swim during the summer. I like the Weight Room. My favorite machines are the treadmill and the elliptical and I use the arm weights. When I graduate, I will miss going to the weight room with my classmates.

I will miss my friends, Dominic, Derek, Eric, and Kevin, our assistant, and talking to friends during break and lunch.

After my graduation, and my sister's, our family will be going to Washington, DC and visiting my DeTrane grandparents in Virginia. This fall, I will be taking the semester off so we can travel to visit my brother at Pepperdine University and watch him in his water polo games.

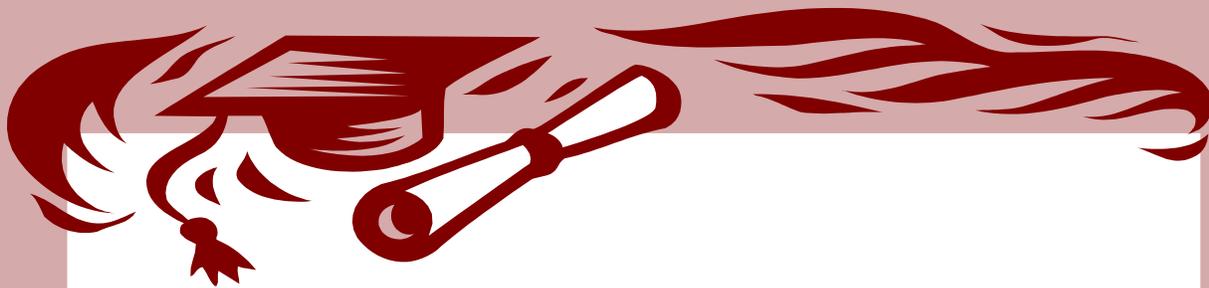
I will be home all next fall and probably do some traveling and stuff around the house.

To my classmates I am going to miss, I wish you good luck in the next year. It won't be the same when I do not hang out with you every day.



Nick

I first started at **CSB** when I was 13 years old. It was the first time I lived in a dorm. The fire alarm would sometimes scare me, because I did not expect it. When I was in Westridge I didn't have a roommate. I moved to Southridge and I had Markus as my roommate. We were both in music with Mr. Siligo. Markus and I were in Jazz Ensemble. I also had Jonathan and Eric as my roommates in Southridge in different years. Then I moved to Northridge in January 2008 and I had Jonathan as my roommate again. Then I had Markus as a roommate again. When the school year started in 2009-2010, the Northridge dorm had all boys in both front and back. For a little while, my roommate was Anthony. For two years, I had Kiko as my roommate. The funny part I like about Kiko is when he talks to himself a lot. I will miss you when I am gone. I met Mr. Siligo when I came to **CSB**. The first instrument he taught me was piano and keyboard. He also taught me some songs to sing. Then he taught me how to play the flute. I will miss Mr. Siligo when I am gone. I hope to keep up with my music after graduation. On June 13, I will be moving into a group home. It is in Southern California. I hope everyone has a good summer and I will come back to visit. Thank you.



**Congratulations to the graduating
class of 2012
California School for the Blind**

Sounds of Space

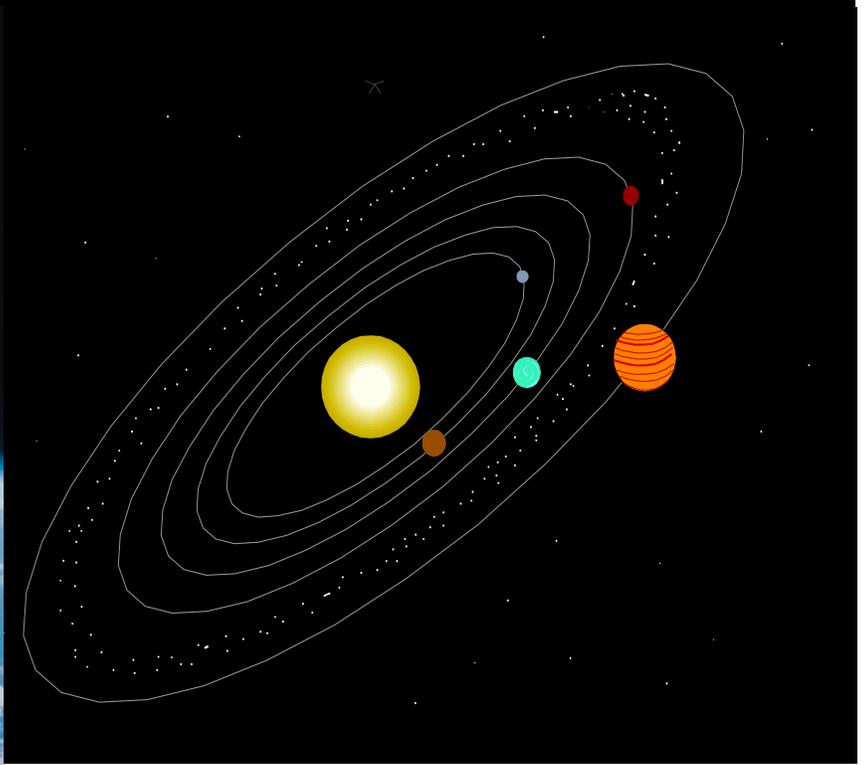
By: Alysa Chadow

CSB was paid a visit by Brian Day of the NASA/Ed Eames Research Center. His presentation, which occurred at the end of March, was the culmination of many weeks of planning on our school's part.

Dr. Day was hoping to recruit people to listen for unusual sounds in outer space. Who better to participate in this incredible data collection than our own students?

To this end, Maureen Reardon readied students by asking one question at the beginning of each week via Morning Announcements. Students would have three days to answer it, and all correct responses would be read on Friday morning. The last of these questions, to which everyone replied with a resounding "yes," was if anyone wanted to participate in this project.

The point of the data collection will be to detect anything new in outer space, such as asteroids and dying stars. Dr. Day's presentation was a fascinating one, and he did a superb job of explaining his mission (no pun intended).



CSB Students Pursue Physical Activity Independently!

By: Sue Swigart, APE Teacher

At **CSB**, all students have the opportunity for physical activity during A.P.E. class and also can choose from many activities after school with their dorms. However, as many students know, one can't rely solely on A.P.E. to take care of all of their fitness needs. The Centers for Disease Control recommend that all individuals participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity, especially aerobic activity, every day or most days of the week, for at least 20 minutes at a time. But wait! Students at **CSB** only get A.P.E. for 120 minutes per week! How, then, can students get the physical activity that they need?

Some students have taken on this responsibility themselves, and have incorporated physical activities from outside of school into their weekly routines. Other students have supplemented their A.P.E. activities with planned physical activity on-campus.

Goalball: Abel and Stuart

Abel D. and Stuart S. joined a goalball team near to their homes in southern California. Abel first started practicing after he started to lose his vision. Abel has been playing with the team for two years now. "Ironically," Abel begins, when asked how he found out about goalball, "I knew about it from working with students with visual impairment the summer before I started losing my vision."

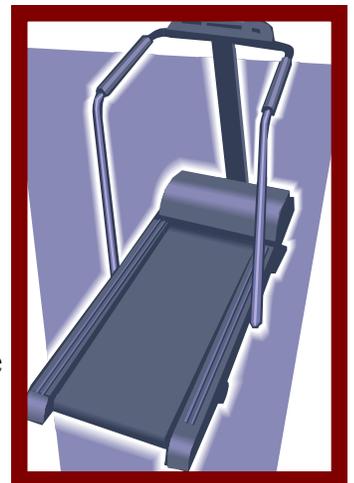
Abel told Stuart, with whom he flies to southern California on the same plane each Friday. Stuart began to come to practice in the fall of 2011.

Besides getting the benefit of physical activity, Abel adds that being on the team is a "good opportunity for travel, for meeting people, and for getting tips on becoming a better athlete." Abel has travelled with the team to St. Augustine, FL, Detroit, MI, Utah, Colorado Springs, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, South Carolina, and even Montreal and Mexico.

Says Stuart: "We have practice every Saturday from 10:00-12:00." Stuart lists other benefits for competing on a team: "better understanding of the world around you, communicating with others, and getting other players' perspective."

CSB's "Biggest Loser"

Though a preoccupation with weight, body image, and weight loss can be unhealthy and even dangerous, for many students at **CSB**, weight gain has been a major challenge. From an Adapted Physical Education standpoint, weight gain negatively affects a student's ability to participate in some activities (ice skating and boating in particular), but more importantly also negatively influences self-esteem and general health and longevity. Unfortunately, especially for female transition-age students, a weight gain of 7 pounds or more per year is not uncommon. So, it is with great admiration and respect that I announce that Jacqueline A. of Jonathan Waite's transition class has taken the "biggest loser" award. I am not going to make public the number of pounds that



Continued on next
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CSB Students Pursue Physical Activity Independently! Continued

Jacqueline has lost (you can ask her!), but let me just say that it is both impressive and healthy. Jacqueline began working out with her class when she started her attendance at **CSB** in the fall. Mr. Waite's class has the opportunity to visit the Fitness Center every morning except Wednesday mornings, her A.P.E. day.

I caught up with Jacqueline during a walk at Lake Elizabeth in March, and asked her a few questions.

Jacqueline wants to continue to lose weight and expresses a desire for her clothes to feel and fit better.

Sue "Do you work out at home?"

Jacqueline: "We don't have a treadmill at home, but we can go for walks, yeah." "I think you would fall if you try to go that fast...(without using the treadmill)..."(Jacqueline can easily jog for 10 minutes or more on the treadmill).

Sue "How does it make you feel when you are working out on the treadmill?"

Jacqueline: "It feels good...(working out)..."

Sue "Do you like to get a sweat going?"

Jacqueline: "Yes."

Sue: " Had you used a treadmill before coming to **CSB**?"

Jacqueline: "No. They don't have treadmills in my district at my old school."

Thanks, Jacqueline, for being willing to share this interview with Braille Bites, and congratulations on becoming more fit!

College: Robin

Another student, Robin P., has been taking a swimming class at Ohlone College. According to Robin, the class started in January and will continue through mid-May. The class lasts for one hour and is a "free swim" class. Robin shared that she had a goal of swimming one half mile per session, but, sadly, her swim fins were stolen. She has had to readjust her expectations.

I asked Robin how she decided to take this class.

"Since this is my last semester here (at **CSB**), I knew that I would be pretty busy, and if I didn't have homework, it would be easier. There is not a lot of homework in P.E., and I like swimming."

Sue: "Are you enjoying the class?"

RP: " Yeah, definitely."

Robin also notes that her swim class functions as a good stress reliever. She would take the class again if she could.

